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ABSTRACT

This report describes and analyzes the efforts and achievements made in Cambodia during the past 16 years with a special focus on developments after the United Nations organized election in 1993. During this process UNESCO played a small but important part in the reconstruction of education, freedom of expression (through the training of journalists), and protection of Angkor Temples, a major cultural heritage of Cambodia and the world. As background, the report points out that the end of World War II in 1945 marked the beginning of conflict and misery for Cambodia. The Cambodian War escalated to its peak during the 1970s and caused over two million deaths and hundreds of thousands of disabilities. The report is divided into the following chapters: (1) "Introduction" (offers geographical and historical background information on Cambodia, and educational planning objectives and Year 2000 targets); (2) "Focus on Primary Education" (presents goals and strategies for primary education, material on and a model of cluster schools, and problems to overcome); (3) "Other Aspects of Basic Education" (provides material on the adult literacy program, preschool education, lower secondary education, and training in essential skills through nonformal education); and (4) "Conclusion" (contains material on meeting needs, including a funding summary, coordination between donor agencies, and conclusions). Three annexes furnish acronyms and abbreviations, a list of pilot cluster school sites in Cambodia, and a 14-item selected bibliography. (BT)

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ED 433 269

Rebirth of the Learning Tradition: A Case Study on the Achievements of Education for All in Cambodia

Mid-Decade Review of Progress Towards Education for All

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FOREWORD

Five years after the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand 1990, **the International Consultative Forum on Education for All** (the EFA Forum) undertook a review of how far countries have come in their efforts to reach Education for All.

This stocktaking of progress was done by various means. It drew on statistics and reports done by ministries of education all over the world. To complement these governmental reports, the EFA Forum asked a number of independent researchers in developing countries to provide a more in-depth view of Education for All in their countries.

From among these case studies on interesting experiences in providing basic education, we have selected a few for publication. For example, these studies look at the challenges of getting girls to stay in school and complete their primary education even though they are needed in the household economy or the school environment is geared to boys; efforts to provide education in emergency situations due to war and conflict; and the provision of education in the mother tongue of the pupils to promote learning. In short, these case studies deal with some of the current issues in basic education worldwide, and they shed light on the varying conditions in which basic education takes place. The approach and perspective vary between the studies, reflecting the diversity of the actors involved in EFA. We hope you will find these studies interesting reading.

The authors of the case studies have been selected and contracted by field offices of UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO. These offices also proposed the themes of the studies. The EFA Forum Secretariat wishes to extend its thanks to the authors and the field offices that have provided efficient assistance in carrying out these case studies.

These case studies are written by independent researchers and consultants. The views expressed on policies, programmes and projects are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the EFA Forum.

Final editing was done by the Secretariat of the EFA Forum.

REBIRTH
OF
THE LEARNING TRADITION

A Case Study on the Achievements
of Education for All in Cambodia

by Supote Prasertsri
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Phnom Penh, March 1996

Author's Foreword

Since the early period of this century the world has experienced two of the most devastating wars in the history of human civilization. For most of the world, the Second World War ended in 1945 with the establishment of the United Nations to promote peace and development. But for Cambodia, the end of this war marked the beginning of conflict and misery. The war in Cambodia escalated to its peak during 1970 to 1979, and the protracted fighting has continued to the present day. The war has caused over two million deaths and hundreds thousands of disabilities.

Unlike other previous conflicts, it was the educated people -- especially teachers -- who were the targets of the destruction in this war. Unfortunately, the goal of this destruction was largely achieved. Because of the great loss of trained teachers, the task of rebuilding the education system has faced one of the most difficult circumstances in this century.

This report attempts to describe and analyze the efforts and achievements made during the past 16 years, with a special focus on developments after the UN-organized election in 1993 -- a process that cost US$2 billion and where UNESCO played a small but important part in the reconstruction of education, freedom of expression (through the training of journalists) and protection of Angkor Temples, a major cultural heritage of Cambodia and the World.

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to the following individuals for their invaluable contribution to this study in various capacities: H.E. Mr. Tol Lah (Minister), H.E. Mr. Kea Sahan (Secretary of State), and H.E. Mr. Bun Sok (Under-Secretary of State) of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for the information on policy and history of education; Mr. Mike Radcliffe, ADB Consultant, for the draft paper prepared for the Regional EFA Review Meeting in Hanoi; Dr Anne Dykstra of UNICEF Cambodia for information on the Cluster Schools; and to all senior education ministry officials who have devoted their time for the various discussion and meetings on Education for All in Cambodia. A special thanks is extended Dr. Khnouyvanisvong, Director, UNESCO Office in Cambodia, for encouragements and to Mr.Michael Wills for his assistance in preparing the draft of this report into English and his skills in preparing statistical tables and graphs.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Cambodia - Geographical and Historical Background 1
1.2 Rebuilding a Culture of Peace through Education 2
1.3 Evolution of the Education System and Current Constraints 2
1.4 Laying the Foundations for Reconstruction in the 1980s 5
1.5 Plan Objectives and Target for the Year 2000 6

CHAPTER TWO - FOCUS ON PRIMARY EDUCATION 7

2.1 Goals and Strategies for Primary Education 7
2.2 Cluster Schools - Choosing an Appropriate Model 7
2.3 The Cluster School at Work - a Range of Activities 9
2.3.1 Rebuilding the Learning Environment - School Construction 9
2.3.2 Teacher Training Programmes 9
2.3.3 Resource Development - Providing Learning Materials 10
2.3.4 Rebuilding Confidence in Communities 10
2.4 Expanding the Model - Prospects for Growth 11
2.5 Problems to Overcome 12

CHAPTER THREE - OTHER ASPECTS OF BASIC EDUCATION 13

3.1 Adult Literacy Programme 13
3.2 Pre-School Education 14
3.3 Lower Secondary Education 15
3.4 Training in Essential Skills - Non-Formal Education 16

CHAPTER FOUR - CONCLUSION 17

4.1 Meeting Needs - Funding Summary and Projections 17
4.2 Co-ordination Between Donor Agencies 19
4.3 Conclusion 20

ANNEXES 21

Annex 1. Acronyms and Abbreviations 21
Annex 2. Pilot Cluster School Sites in Cambodia 22
Annex 3. Selected Bibliography 23

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Cambodia - Geographical and Historical Background

The kingdom of Cambodia is a small country situated in the heart of Southeast Asia. Bordering with Thailand, Laos and Vietnam, it covers an area of around 181,000 square kilometres - about the same size as Bulgaria or the state of Missouri. Although the Northeast and Northwest regions are mountainous, plains cover most of the kingdom, dissected by the Mekong river flowing from Tibet in the Himalayas on its course to South China Sea. The capital Phnom Penh is located at the confluence of the Mekong and Cambodia's second great river - the Tonlé Sap - which feeds the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia.

Cambodia's environment is one of the most unspoiled in the region. Forests still cover around 40% of the kingdom, and Cambodia boasts a wide variety of species: there are between 300 and 400 species of freshwater fish in the Great Lake alone. Agriculture, hunting and fishing are the predominant means of livelihood for 80-85% of the ten-million population. But in spite of the potential richness of the land, recent events have led to food shortages.

Cambodia has a history stretching back almost 2,000 years. The Angkor period from the 9th to the 15th centuries marks one of the heights of this long tradition. The Cambodian kings at this time built the magnificent temples of Angkor north of the Great Lake, and their empire stretched far into what is now Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. The Angkor period is rightly regarded as a golden age in Cambodian history.

Perhaps the most enduring phenomenon affecting Cambodia since the fall of Angkor in 1432 has been foreign interference. The kingdom was troubled by Siam, Champa and then Vietnam for the following three centuries. In the 19th century the French arrived, and incorporated Cambodia into their Indochinese empire. The country then fell under Japanese occupation during the second world war. After achieving independence it struggled to avoid being drawn into the Vietnam war, though fighting spilled over from 1970 to 1975 as US influence grew in Cambodia. From 1975 to 1979, when the Khmer Rouge ruled the country, China was the only power which had influence in Cambodia.

The radical four-year rule of the Khmer Rouge from 1975-79 was a dark period in Cambodia's recent history - one which its people are still struggling to understand and come to terms with. During the 1980s, Cambodia suffered international isolation from the West, receiving aid and assistance from just Vietnam, the Soviet Union, the socialist bloc, and some non-aligned countries.

Fighting between rival political factions and foreign interference continued through the decade, until a peace accord was signed in Paris in 1991 and a UN-sponsored peace process and elections took place from 1992-93 (under the auspices of UNTAC - the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia). The kingdom now faces the challenges of post-war reconstruction and integration into the emerging economies of the Asia-Pacific region.

1.2 Rebuilding a Culture of Peace Through Education

For more than 20 years, Cambodians have been living in the shadow of violence. In spite of the peace process, small groups of Khmer Rouge guerrillas continue to wage a terrorist war in some areas, thus forcing the government to devote 45-50% of public expenditure to defence. Hundreds of thousands of people are still displaced because of fighting.

The human cost of the state-sponsored violence and warfare has been terrible. The investigation into the genocide, which has been an on-going process since 1979, estimates that between one and two *million* Cambodians are thought to have died during the past 20 years. Tens of thousands more fled to refugee camps on the Thai border, or left their homes and families to begin life in exile in other parts of Asia, or in Europe, Australia or the United States.

Cambodia, which used to be one of the most prosperous countries in Southeast Asia, is now racked with poverty and considered one of the least developed countries in the world, ranking 147 out of 173 according to UNDP's *Human Development Report*. Warfare has destroyed much of the country's infrastructure, and continues to impede economic growth. An appalling legacy is the vast number of landmines (an estimated eight million) which have been scattered across the kingdom. These mines kill and maim more than hundreds of people each year - most of whom are children and people of working age.

The arduous task of rebuilding a culture of peace and democracy - a society where respect for law and human rights prevails over the power of the gun, will be long and painful. Education has a major role to play in this search for peace, but the education system, like so much of Cambodia, has been damaged almost beyond repair. According the 1993-94 government *Report on the Socio-economic Survey,* 31 per cent of the household population over five years has no education, and almost four fifth have only primary education. Around 4 per cent have only completed senior secondary schooling and 0.1 per cent of this population have a university degree. Nearly half of women were illiterate compared to 37 per cent of men. The mean years of schooling was only 3.5.

1.3 Evolution of the Education System and Current Constraints

Angkor was more than just the political centre of the Khmer empire between the 9th and 15th centuries. It was also a seat of learning and academic excellence for the entire Southeast Asian region, as well as a focus for Khmer culture. The fall of Angkor in 1432 led to the collapse of this urban education system, and much knowledge was lost.

The fall of Angkor, however, did not mark the end of education provision in Cambodia. Teaching continued in rural areas through the Buddhist temples - the heart of local communities. Temple learning centres, which were built by local people and ran by volunteers, not only gave instruction in moral issues according to Buddhist scriptures, but also taught practical lessons in agriculture, arts and crafts and traditional medicine. A self-sustaining system of education therefore continued in the kingdom despite the political decline.

Cambodia at a Glance	
Area (sq. km)	181,000
Population	9,870,000
Population under 15 years of age	4,310,000
Birth rate (# per 1,000)	40
Population growth rate (% per annum)	2.8
Life expectancy (years)	50

Under the French protectorate, government-run schools were re-introduced in Phnom Penh. This system was extended to other urban centres at the beginning of the 20th century. Teachers in the government schools received wages from the state. More female students were able to receive an education than had been the case with temple-based education. At the same time, temple learning centres continued to function in rural areas, giving a dual-track education system. Prospects for education in Cambodia were looking good until the political troubles of the 1970s.

The Khmer Rouge dismantled the entire education system of Cambodia between 1975 and 1979; all schools and universities were then closed and allowed to fall into disrepair. School buildings were often put to other uses such as storehouses for grain and livestock. The banning of religion also spelled the demise of the temple learning centres.

But damage was done to more than just the infrastructure of education. Cambodia lost almost three-quarters of its educated people under the Khmer Rouge - teachers, graduates and intellectuals who were killed as a threat to the state, or who managed to escape into exile. The generation who were at school, or who should have gone to school, in the mid-1970s also suffered. For almost four years, no-one in Cambodia received formal education.

The education system now faces immense problems - the first of which is a severe shortage of school facilities. There are around two million children in Cambodia who should be attending primary school, but due to an insufficient number of classrooms, over 300,000 children aged 6-10 are out of school. At the moment schools operate in a shift system, with some students attending class in the morning and others in the afternoon. Cambodian children are receiving fewer hours of instruction than their neighbors elsewhere in the region. There are also inequalities in terms of access to education across the kingdom, with a lack of facilities in remote areas. Existing school buildings need to be rebuilt and restored. New schools need to be built in the rural areas and in mountainous regions.

A second serious constraint is the lack of trained and educated human resources. There is a shortage of teachers (for reasons given above), and difficulties motivating teachers because salaries are low. In urban areas primary school teachers earn around $30 per month, in rural areas as little as $20 - though in the latter most are able to supplement their income through farming activities.

The level of training of teachers tends to be low. Almost one-third of primary school teachers have themselves not completed lower secondary education. This has a negative impact on their quality of teaching, and hampers moves towards developing new participatory

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teaching methods, relevant curricula and interesting text books. There is a desperate need to recruit and train more teachers.

A third constraint is the lack of necessary teaching materials and equipment. Less than two-thirds of primary school children have textbooks. The teaching materials that are available often have little relevance to the world of the children who are using them. In some cases, children spend their time in the classroom learning by rote information which they find hard to use outside.

A fourth constraint is that of getting children into school. Net primary school enrolment across the kingdom is low at around 80% (and lower still in rural areas). Class repetition rate at 30% is one of the highest in the world. High drop-out rates mean that half of all students in primary school do not reach grade three, and only one-third complete grade five.

A fifth constraint is the lack of peace and security in some provinces, especially in the North-western part, where a protracted war has been going on since signing of the Peace Accord. The continued conflict has displaced hundreds thousands of people, including children.

There are lots of reasons why so many children do not attend school. In more remote areas of the kingdom it is often just a case of the school being too far away. Certain groups are especially disadvantaged in terms of access. There are often problems of finance; many poor families cannot afford to feed and clothe themselves, let alone meet school fees. In other cases parents engage their children to work for the family business. Other disadvantaged groups include orphans and homeless children - who are forced to beg to survive, and children returning from refugee camps, who sometimes require special provision. Children of the ethnic groups in the highland, the Great Lake and along Mekong River have also been out-of-school due to the lack of services for them.

Perhaps the most noticeable failing of the current system is the continuing low attendance by girls. Girls are under-represented in the education system (see below), and are often actively discouraged from completing their education. The percentage of girls' enrolment is 45 for primary, 39 for lower secondary, 35 for upper secondary, and 14 at tertiary levels. According to a recent survey, poverty was cited by parents as a major reason for not sending girls to schools. Equalizing access to primary education, therefore, is one of the most urgent tasks facing the government today.

The shortage of school facilities and teachers, lack of text books, and non-attendance among a number of groups of children are causing serious problems. Other constraints include the lack of skills training for income generation and the lack of opportunities for continuing education for drop-outs. Under such conditions, children in Cambodia, and especially the most vulnerable, are not learning even the most basic skills in literacy and numeracy, nor the skills, knowledge and values to face up to the urgent problems of the present and the uncertainties of the future.

Key Education Indicators (1994)

	Male	Female	Total
Enrolment in grades one to five	947,181	756,135	1,703,316
(of which # repeating students)	(292,706)	(255,563)	(518,269)
Out-of school children (aged 6-10)	114,866	202,847	317,713
Gross enrolment ratio (%)	109	100	105
Net enrolment ratio (%)	87	75	80
Drop-out rate (%)	8	14	11
Mean years of education	4.7	2.5	3.5

1.4 Laying the Foundations for Reconstruction in the 1980s

The government of the 1980s devoted most of its efforts in education to re-opening the facilities which had been closed down. Teaching staff were given crash training courses (sometimes for as little as three to six weeks) before being sent out to re-open schools. At the same time, a series of adult education and literacy campaigns were launched in an effort to restore general levels of education in Cambodia.

These mass campaigns, backed with financial and technical assistance from countries in the socialist bloc, had considerable quantitative success. Around 900,000 children were able to go back to school when the doors re-opened in 1979, and school enrolments increased through the decade (see below). The literacy campaigns reached more than one million illiterate adults, though a lack of follow-up support and training reduced their effectiveness.

Basic education was also established for the hundred thousands of Cambodian refugees and orphans living in refugee camps along the Thai border, first under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and later under the United Nations Border Relief Operations (UNBRO). Despite border fighting, enrolment and participation at all levels was exceptionally high. This could be explained by the provision of incentives such as free food distribution to all children and the high motivation and participation of the communities. NGOs played the major role in supporting refugee education in the camps, as well as basic education inside Cambodia.

Much of the education system in Cambodia was put back into working order during the 1980s, though the quality of teaching and learning was irregular. After the UN-sponsored peace process from 1991-93, the government began to shift its focus from quantitative expansion to qualitative improvement through the undertaking of comprehensive reforms at all education levels. Since 1993, UNESCO has been playing an important role in strengthening the management and planning capabilities of senior education officials by engaging hundreds of them in training programmes.

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1.5 Plan Objectives and Target for the Year 2000

According to the first 5-year Education and Training Plan, the targets for primary education are to:

* extend the duration of primary education by one year as part of the introduction of a 6+3+3 school system
* increase the net primary enrolment ratio to 90 per cent
* achieve an equal gender balance in primary enrolment
* reduce the repetition rate from 30 to 10 per cent
* ensure that at least 85 per cent of the pupils enrolled in grade 1 complete 6th grade

For lower secondary, the targets for the year 2000 are to:

* achieve a net enrolment ratio of 40 per cent
* increase the share of female students to at least 45 per cent
* ensure that 65 per cent of grade 9 students pass the 9th grade examination

For literacy, continuing education and skills training, a new non-formal education has been developed with the aim to:

* reduce the illiteracy rate from 35 to 15 per cent
* provide access to continuing education for 500,000 primary and secondary school drop-outs
* organize skills training programme for unemployed youth and adults

In order to achieve the above objectives and targets, a multi-pronged effort is being made, including (1) increasing the share of national budget to education from 9 to 15 per cent by the year 2000; (2) expanding the Cluster School System, lower secondary education, literacy, skills training and pre-school programmes nation-wide; (3) conducting on-the-job training for all 37,800 primary and secondary school teachers, literacy facilitators, and pre-school teachers cum volunteers; (4) increasing the contact hours from 600 to 750 for primary levels; (5) renovating and constructing school facilities and improvement in the utilization of existing community facilities; (6) reforming the curriculum and the educational system; and (7) capacity building for educational planners, managers and administrators at all levels mentioned above.

CHAPTER TWO - FOCUS ON PRIMARY EDUCATION

2.1 Goals and Strategies for Primary Education

Cambodia has adopted a number of plans and strategies to achieve the goals of Education for All (EFA). An *Education Investment Framework (1995-2000)* and the *First Socio-Economic Development Plan (1996-2000)*, which were endorsed by the government in 1994 and 1995, include three related programmes in basic education. The three programmes aim to improve the quality of basic education, to increase access to basic education (for girls and children from minority groups), and to strengthen the government's planning and management capacity.

The main focus of these plans is primary education. Specific quantitative targets include increasing the length of primary education by one year (from five to six), increasing primary net enrolment to a rate of 90%, and achieving an equal gender balance in primary education. Qualitative targets are to reduce repetition rates from 30 to 10 per cent and to ensure a growth in survival rates through grades one to six from 32 to 85 per cent.

The government hopes that consolidating recent progress, while undertaking wide-ranging reforms will enhance the learning environment for millions of children. It will also build a solid foundation from which to address the problems facing other sectors of the formal education system (secondary and higher) and non-formal education (pre-schooling and adult education) towards the end of the decade.

But despite the progress which has been made in recent years, improving primary education in Cambodia is still a massive undertaking. The government, international agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which are working in the field of education have had to search for a development model that is both relevant to the needs of children and communities and which is cost-effective and sustainable.

2.2 Cluster Schools - Choosing an Appropriate Model

In mid-1993, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MOEYS) decided to establish a number of "cluster schools". Target sites in four provinces included both urban and rural areas, remote regions, and areas with a high proportion of ethnic minorities. Other international agencies and NGOs, such as Redd Barna (Norway), Concern (Ireland) and SIPAR (France), have since adopted the cluster (or a similar) model in some of their project sites. Cluster schools are now operating in seven provinces in Cambodia.

The cluster is a group of between four or five and eight primary schools in the same neighbourhood or district which work together as a single unit. One school is chosen as the "core", and functions as the administrative heart of the cluster. All the schools in the cluster share their facilities, teaching materials, and even teaching staff. Local teacher training takes place at the core school.

The core school also has a "resource centre", which serves as a place for research for teaching staff and students, and as a meeting place for the community as a whole. The

resource centre provides a wide range of training as well as offering community development activities.

Cluster size projections

	Low	Medium	High
Students	2,000	4,500	6,500
Teachers	60	100	140
Classrooms	30	50	70

The cluster has the advantage of improving the quality of both teaching and learning, and enhancing the resources available to all the schools. Weaker schools also benefit from their stronger neighbors.The cluster model in Cambodia has four main objectives:

- *achieving economic cost-effectiveness* - classroom facilities and supplies are shared among the schools in the cluster (such as teaching materials, library books and sports equipment); teaching staff can rotate between schools (particularly specialised teachers of music, art and physical education); and the cluster can order supplies and materials in bulk, reducing overall levels of expenditure;

- *improving the quality of learning* - all of the schools in the cluster have equal access to facilities and teachers; teacher training is made easier and teaching methods are improving (regular meetings enable the sharing of ideas and facilitate problem-solving; such meetings have also been used to provide in-service training); and standards and enthusiasm are also improving with regular academic and non-academic competitions between the schools;

- *improving administration* - district education officers deal with one cluster rather than a number of disparate schools; the clusters can adopt appropriate solutions to local problems, such as planning for local population changes to ensure adequate provision of school places, instead of having of follow over-general national strategies. The cluster is also in a good position to seize opportunities and make use of local skills and other resources;and

- *Enhancing community development* - the cluster model relies upon a high degree of community participation. Parents are fully involved in establishing and developing the cluster, and are encouraged to take an interest in the education of their children. The cluster can also provide opportunities for non-formal education and distance-learning activities.

The cluster school model is not unique to Cambodia, but its main features - a cost-effective, decentralised means of developing primary education with full community participation - suggest that it is entirely appropriate to the Cambodian situation.

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2.3 The Cluster School at Work - a Range of Activities

2.3.1 Rebuilding the Learning Environment - School Construction

One of the most pressing problems in education in Cambodia since the mid-1970s has been a severe shortage of school facilities. Most buildings fell into a state of disrepair during the years of fighting, and despite considerable efforts made during the 1980s, in large parts of the kingdom classroom provision is still inadequate.

Development of the cluster school network has allowed agencies and the government to tackle this problem without the need to undertake massive and expensive construction work. One of the advantages of the cluster network is that it allows expansion of school facilities in a given district through the sharing of existing classrooms. With building work focusing on the core school all the children in the cluster benefit, while the expense involved remains low.

Another feature of construction in the cluster school network has been the active participation of local communities in building work. In some cases this might be a case of local families contributing to the costs of the work. In others, local carpenters and brick-layers might be employed.

This phenomenon relates well to the tradition of establishing community and temple learning centres (see above). The cluster school model taps into the vein of public willingness to assist in the provision of education. At the same time, the involvement of provincial authorities and international agencies and NGOs enables the smooth integration of the cluster schools into the nation-wide education system.

2.3.2 Teacher Training Programmes

Another advantage of the cluster model is that it facilitates the monitoring of the quality of teaching and teacher training at a local level. Training can also be made more flexible, fitting in with the needs of all the schools in the cluster and the individual teachers concerned.

Save the Children Fund (Australia) organised a successful year-long teacher training programme for a school cluster in Kandal province. This featured a mix of intensive training during school holidays, weekly training sessions for small groups of teachers, and finally follow-up training in the classroom.

The results of the programme were successful. Teachers gained a greater awareness of curriculum content and teaching methods. Both teachers and their trainers expressed great satisfaction with the content and methods of the training programme.

Flexible teacher training through the cluster network has brought real qualitative changes to teaching methods and the teaching and learning process. Where successful, training has put an end to the old practice of learning by rote - in some schools children would often spend much of their time copying lessons down from the blackboard. With the clusters, group-based and activity-based learning are beginning to emerge.

2.3.3 Resource Development - Providing Learning Materials

The cluster network has been ideal for developing curricula that are more appropriate to the current situation in Cambodia. Human rights, democracy and health education were re-introduced during the UNTAC period, and are being continued through the cluster network. Cluster schools have also allowed the testing of text books and other learning materials in pilot areas before their introduction nation-wide.

UNICEF is the major agency involved in curriculum development, and has been focusing its attention on the core subjects of Khmer language and mathematics. Its target is for children completing primary education to be functionally literate. (The MOEYS has since defined completion of grade six as functional literacy.)

With this objective in mind, UNICEF has adopted a dual approach. New text books and other learning materials are being developed. At the same time, old copies of still-useable text books are being reprinted in an effort to meet the huge shortages. The government now aims to provide one text book per student in Khmer and mathematics, and one book per two students in other subjects. (In areas with a large proportion of ethnic minorities, the target is one book per student in all subjects.)

The cluster school model is also well-suited to the development of wider resources within the community. The resource centre at the core of the cluster is expected to compile information which will assist local education planners - such as data on enrolment, repetition, drop-out, completion and access rates. This information will also include data for provincial education offices, teaching materials for staff, and eventually books for the students. The Japan Sotoshu Relief Committee (JSRC) has been building up a successful library and resource centre at a project in Takeo.

2.3.4 Rebuilding Confidence in Communities

The cluster school has proved such a success in Cambodia because it is meeting a range of needs in a cost-effective manner. Existing clusters have brought immediate benefits to their communities. Children are gaining greater access to primary education and to a better quality of education. Families are encouraged to take an active role in the planning and management of the cluster - laying the foundations for parent-teacher co-operation. And local businesses benefit from construction and restoration work which takes place in the cluster.

Such achievements, over and above the educational impacts of the cluster, are of great significance in Cambodia. The years of fighting have created a culture of fear and mistrust in the kingdom. People have been forced to look out for their own interests in order to survive. Development of the cluster schools has the additional benefit of bringing people together again and encouraging sharing and co-operation within communities.

The nature of the cluster model is also in keeping with traditions of learning in Cambodia. One of the opportunities for the cluster network is its potential to expand into a wide range of non-formal and adult education as it becomes more established. This pattern of development bears a strong resemblance to the traditional role of the temple in the community - a centre of learning and shared values.

2.4 Expanding the Model - Prospects for Growth . . .

Cluster schools are now operating in seven provinces in Cambodia, ranging from remote rural areas like Banteay Meanchey to bustling urban centres such as Battambang. The government carried out a thorough evaluation of the cluster school network in 1995 and found that the cluster model was a great success. Enrolment rates were higher, while repetition and drop-out rates were down. Learning achievement and the quality of teaching had both improved. Both teachers and students expressed enthusiasm.

Developing the cluster school programme to date has been extremely cost-effective. The cost of building and rehabilitating a classroom has been on average between $1,250-$2,500 per classroom, with local communities providing up to 20% of the total funding and labour. UNICEF estimates that black and white text book printing and distribution costs as little as $0.30 per book.

Each resource centre costs around $7,000 to build (with local communities providing up to 15 per cent of the total funding) and $2,000 for initial supplies and equipment. Restocking has been estimated to cost $200 per year. The cost of fully developing a cluster (including the renovation of existing classrooms and the construction of new ones) is around $55,000.

In the light of this positive evaluation, the considerable academic achievements of the existing cluster schools, and the low expenditure involved, the MOEYS decided in February 1996 to expand the cluster school network into a nation-wide programme from the seven pilot schemes.

It has instructed provincial education offices nation-wide to establish school clusters wherever it is feasible to do so. Current strategies include grouping all primary schools into clusters where possible, in accordance with government guidelines. In remote and mountainous areas, where the cluster model would face difficulties because of large distances, other approaches are being explored.

One of the anticipated benefits from expansion of the cluster school network will be an increase in primary school enrolment. Accurate enrolment projections for the period 1996-2000 are difficult because of the absence of reliable data, but one projection is shown in the adjacent table. A "medium" scenario projects a primary school population of 2.2 million by 2000. Based on current repetition rates, a "high scenario" enrolment could reach at least 2.4 million by 2000.

Developing the cluster school network is also an excellent foundation from which to provide non-formal education and training in essential skills in the future. Through the cluster schools it will be possible to promote health education (such as nutrition and sanitation), to begin to improve the status of girls and women (through affirmative action schemes), to develop programmes for early childhood care and development (in line with EFA goals), to promote adult literacy and to search for alternative education provision for children in difficult circumstances (such as orphans, displaced children, disabled children, street children, landmine victims, etc.).

2.5 Problems to Overcome

In developing the cluster school system, some problems have been encountered nonetheless. A lack of co-operation between provincial education offices, international agencies and NGOs hindered progress in some instances (one project in Svey Rieng had a period of considerable difficulties because of poor relations with the local education office). A more far-reaching problem has been the lack of co-ordination between different international agencies and government ministries. Although not a major cause for concern, this may cause difficulties for curriculum and text book development in the future. Different NGOs have so far been free to develop their own teaching materials in isolation from one another. As primary education becomes more organised and formalised, and the government seeks to introduce standards across the system, difficulties might arise.

Regarding school facilities, the change from a double shift system to a full day system can only be achieved if the number of classrooms is increased from the current 27,000 to around 47,000. This will cost around US$100 million. However, so far, the Government has had the funds to build only 1,000 classrooms per year, representing only 5 per cent of the required number. The need for classrooms will continue rise if the rate of completion remains low (54 per cent) and the rate of repetition (30 per cent) is not drastically reduced. In Siem Reap and Battambang Provinces, where the war still continues, at least five schools were burned down by the Khmer Rouge's torches in 1995. Thirty schools were closed down for security reasons. As a result, funding alone will not guarantee the survival of schools in contested areas. A political solution is therefore needed for this problem.

From 1993 to 1995, around 14.5 per cent of the 1.7 million primary school children were covered by the Cluster School system. Quantitative expansion with qualitative improvement always takes time and consumes resources. However, from 1996 onwards, the coverage may reach 25 per cent due to the availability of trained administrators and the increase in bilateral donor funding. Another constraint is the academic coverage. The current improvement is focused mainly on the teaching of Khmer language and mathematics. As soon as new learning materials in science, social studies and other subjects are available, teachers will be trained in all new subjects.

The low salary of teachers has been cited as another key constraint which impedes an improvement in the quality and expansion of enrolment. The MOEYS has improved this situation by introducing two new measures in 1994-95: (1) an increase of US$8 per month per teacher across the board as a professional award, and (2) provision of an additional US$ 6 per month per head for teachers who are voluntarily participating in the in-service training programme, funded by the European Union. In some urban areas where the cost of living is higher than in rural ones, government teachers do collect school fees directly from parents to supplement their income although this is not officially condoned.

Fortunately, many of the above problems were identified at an early stage and solutions are already being sought. With the government now committed to expanding the cluster school network, communication between education offices at all levels, international agencies providing technical and financial assistance, and of course local communities, will be a priority.

CHAPTER THREE - OTHER ASPECTS OF BASIC EDUCATION

3.1 Adult Literacy Programmes

Illiteracy has been a severe problem in Cambodia since the disruption to education in the mid-1970s. It has been a hindrance to national reconstruction and development. Two mass literacy campaigns during the 1980s (1980-83 and 1984-87) met with initial success, together reaching more than one million people. Inadequate follow-up programmes had an adverse impact on a large proportion of these neo-literates, however. Current estimates indicate an average nation-wide literacy rate of around 65 per cent. There are considerable variations to this figure - rural areas tend to have a much lower literacy rate than urban areas, and there is a distinct gender imbalance (see below). Almost half of the female youth and adults are illiterate, compared to 20 per cent of the male youth.

Literacy rates for population aged 15 years and older (1994)

	Male	Female	Average
Phnom Penh	91.9	63.3	82.0
Other urban areas	84.4	63.2	72.7
Rural areas	78.6	51.0	63.5
Cambodia (extrapolation)	**79.7**	**53.4**	**65.3**

Source: Ministry of Planning *Report on Socio-Economic Survey (1994-95)*

The present picture of assistance is also less than encouraging. Around 15 agencies are now working in the field of adult literacy, including UNESCO (in conjunction with NFUAJ - the National Federation of UNESCO Associations of Japan), UNICEF, Redd Barna, CARE and Save the Children Fund (UK). However, a review by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1994 concluded that existing literacy programmes covered less than half of the provinces in the kingdom, and were reaching less than 1 per cent of the adult population.

Experience in Cambodia shows that literacy action is most effective under two conditions. Firstly, as demonstrated by the community temple learning centres which have played a major role in literacy, moral and skills training for over a thousand years, the support of the communities is crucial. Secondly, the largest national campaign was conducted during the 1980s' when the country was run by a socialist government. The campaign, based on voluntary spirits rather than financial incentives, achieved impressive results despite the on-going conflict in some parts of the country. As the country has entered the market economy, it has become more difficult to initiate such a voluntary campaign again. The only low-cost option left is the community and temple learning centres.

Nonetheless, there have been a number of success stories, although at a small scale. UNESCO, with funding from UNDP and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), executed through the International Catholic Migration Committee (ICMC), a literacy programme for demobilised soldiers from 1993-94. Around 300 soldiers were trained for two weeks as literacy teachers, and then sent to six provinces to teach illiterate groups and soldiers who were demobilising under the UN-sponsored peace process. Around 4,500 people received literacy education under this programme. The lack of funding has prevented the

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programme from expansion.

UNESCO is also running two community-based literacy programmes in Battambang and Siem Reap through temple and community learning centres. These are reaching around 3,500 students a year. UNESCO has also helped to strengthen the planning and management capacities of the provincial education offices in these cases, as well as introducing an innovative "floating learning centre" to meet the needs of fishing villages on the Great Lake.

The general picture reveals that much remains to be done. The government hopes to reduce the illiteracy rate from the current 35 per cent to 15 per cent by the year 2000, and, with technical assistance from UNESCO, has drawn up a comprehensive development plan for non-formal and continuing education with this objective. The programme aims to reach more than 850,000 illiterate and semi-literate youth and adults and 500,000 out-of-school children during the remaining five years of the decade. Funding is being sought for this programme.

The government programme will be village-based and will build upon existing projects run by local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and religious institutions (such as temples and mosques). Teachers will be recruited from within the community. Girls and women will be a priority target group for the programme, as will ethnic minorities and internally-displaced people (IDPs). Curriculum materials will emphasise relevant concerns such as community development, food production, income generation, health education and environmental awareness, and democracy and human rights, to encourage participation.

During the past two years, UNESCO has sponsored two national workshops for literacy programme administrators and material developers. At the same time, literacy manuals for administrators, supervisors, materials developers and teachers have been translated from the regional version developed by UNESCO, adapted and published in the Khmer language for large-scale utilization.

3.2 Pre-School Education

Enrolment patterns in pre-school education have been uneven over the past decade (see below). Growth in the late 1980s was linked to state subsidies. The decline at the beginning of the 1990s was associated with a reduction in government funding, attrition of the pre-school teaching staff, and the closure of some facilities by local authorities. Some facilities were sold to the booming private sector. Recent growth is due for the most part to aid from NGOs, linked to pressure from urban working couples for childcare provision.

The overall net pre-school enrolment rate at present represents less than 10 per cent of 3-5 year olds. There are wide disparities between provinces. In broad terms, pre-schools are concentrated in urban areas, while remote provinces have no access. The development and management of pre-school facilities through religious institutions (such as temple learning centres) and women's groups is envisaged, but to date there has been little substantive progress.

In 1996, a national conference on pre-school education is being planned by the MOEYS and UNESCO, with the aim of identifying the needs and formulating a five-year national plan of action.

3.3 Lower Secondary Schooling

The government is committed to a gradual expansion of secondary education. The 1994-95 enrolments are around 250,000 in lower secondary education and 50,000 in upper secondary education. Enrolment rates stand at about 30 per cent and 10 per cent of the age groups respectively. Expansion of lower secondary provision will be the priority, through the optimum use of existing facilities, the introduction of multi-grade schools in remote rural areas, and new construction in over-crowded urban areas. Affirmative measures (such as the distribution of selective scholarships) will be taken to increase female enrolment in secondary education. Expansion of lower secondary education will be linked to the development of cluster schools.

Government targets include raising enrolment rates to 40 per cent (around 400,000 students) and increasing the proportion of female students to at least 45 per cent. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MOEYS) hopes to achieve a completion rate of 65 per cent in lower secondary education (current figures stand at around 32 per cent) - the MOEYS definition of basic education. Despite the low completion rate however, the demand for secondary education continues to rise. This can be explained by the growth of the private sector and the accompanying increase in the demand for employment, as well as the confidence gained through the clean examination at terminal grades, the open and free education system, and the end of compulsory services in the army.

The current low completion rates are mostly due to government efforts to erase corruption in secondary education. Previously it was not uncommon for students to bribe their teachers in order to pass their exams (completion rates stood at 80-90 per cent). The MOEYS established a national examination board at a cost of US$1 million per year, which now travels between provinces. This board has taken exam supervision out of the hands of local teachers. Consequently, even if the current rate of completion is low, this is not entirely negative, although it is still a pressing concern. Completion rates have to be improved, which will require a further concentration of resources over the next five years, along with the introduction of more innovative solutions, such as offering elective courses, providing vocational courses for some groups of students, and reforming curricula and teacher training.

In curriculum development at secondary level, a number of agencies have been providing assistance. UNICEF is helping with Khmer language and math; UNESCO and UNFPA are helping in social studies integrated with population education. In science, UNESCO is providing technical assistance and UNICEF funding. UNESCO is assisting the MOEYS in formulating a plan to establish the national institute for the development of science, environment and technology education. Financial assistance for this institute is being sought from international donors.

3.4 Training in Essential Skills - Non-Formal Education

Training in essential and vocational skills, and the provision of non-formal education, are another area which until now has been left in the hands of international agencies and NGOs. A number of programmes have been successful, and are providing useful development models, but their coverage has been too limited. Aspirations are high and opportunities good, although funding is again a problem. There are numerous possibilities for linking the provision of non-formal education to the developing cluster school and lower secondary school networks.

Current programmes offering technical/vocational education and skills training (TVET), though limited in scope when compared to the rising demand, cover such areas as agriculture (encouraging crop diversification, and food processing), tourism (tour guide training, hostelry, etc.) and light manufacturing, small enterprises, and services-oriented employment. UNESCO has set up a pilot traditional skills training programme in five centres which offer a variety of short courses in sericulture, silk textile weaving, classical dance and music, wood carving, basketry, bronze and silver smith. Because it is linked to income generation, the programme has been very popular that the demand is always beyond the capacity to respond.

Government plans aim to develop basic non-formal skills training for job creation and income generation in rural areas, non-formal short-term vocational training in urban areas, and a number of formal TVET programmes. The *Investment Framework* envisages the creation of non-formal education development centres in seven provinces. Again, these will build upon existing programmes run by NGOs. The MOEYS announced in the spring of 1996 the nation-wide expansion of TVET, with assistance from the German Development Agency (GTZ) and the ILO.

Distance education has also been discussed as a means to reach a larger population with lower costs. The master plan for this sector is expected to developed in 1996.

CHAPTER FOUR - CONCLUSION

4.1 Meeting the Basic Learning Needs - Funding Summary and Projections

Current government investment in education stands at around Riel 124 billion, of which around 50 per cent is recurrent expenditure (see below). The government is committed to increasing the share of public expenditure for education from the current 9-10 per cent to 15 per cent by the year 2000 (two-thirds of which will be earmarked for basic education). Foreign aid for education amounted to around US$35 million per annum over the past two to three years. There are indications are that such external assistance will continue at least around the same level over the next half decade.

The *Investment Framework* has been the impetus for two major trends in investment patterns. First, there is a growing share of aid from multilateral and bilateral agencies as opposed to a declining share from UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Secondly, the investment balance is shifting towards an emphasis on qualitative improvement instead of quantitative expansion. The proportion between the level of international assistance and government budget for education sector is around 40:60. The investment plan for basic education for the remainder of the decade is shown below.

The government has begun to approach international agencies and NGOs for financial and technical assistance to meet its targets. The response has already been promising. The European Union (EU) is providing $17 million of aid for primary education, while Australia and the United States are proving generous bilateral donors (The United States has just signed a memorandum worth $25 million). Loans are also being secured from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank.

Education Investment Plan 1996-2000

	Programme	Amount ($ million)
1.	**Quality improvement (basic education)**	
	Development of teaching materials Text book printing and distribution, curriculum development, foreign language teaching programmes, etc.	38.210
	Teacher development Teacher training for primary and secondary teachers, training for head teachers, etc.	42.514
	Total	**80.724**
2.	**Ensuring equitable access (basic education)**	
	Development of cluster school resource centres	11.402
	School building rehabilitation and expansion For both primary and lower secondary schools	25.478
	Literacy and complementary schooling programmes Including scholarship programmes for disadvantaged groups, establishment of non-formal education development centres, etc.	16.720
	Total	**53.600**
3.	**Strengthening planning and management**	
	Operational planning capacities Improving financial and human resources planning capabilities at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport	8.428
	Management development Management training staff at the MoEYS	4.210
	Investment management co-ordination Improving aid co-ordination, establishing the Programme Management and Monitoring Unit	3.418
	Policy studies and training Policy development training, undertaking studies, etc.	1.800
	Total	**17.856**
	Grand Total (Basic Education)	**152.280**

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4.2 Co-ordination Between Donor Agencies

Before 1993, donor-government co-ordination in the field of education was inadequate. In part this was due to the nature of donor aid in Cambodia. For much of the 1980s, NGOs were discouraged from working in the country. Those that were active found themselves working on small programmes while the countries of the former socialist bloc (in particular the Soviet Union, Vietnam, East European countries and Cuba) provided financial and technical assistance for large, centrally-planned projects, including scholarships for students and study tours for government officials.

Aid from the socialist bloc declined towards the end of the 1980s. There was some co-ordination between agencies and organisations through the Co-operation Committee for Cambodia (CCC), but on reflection this was insufficient. At this stage, UNICEF was the only UN agency given the mandate to work in Cambodia throughout the 1980s. After the Paris Peace Accord in 1991, other UN agencies, including UNESCO and UNDP, established their operations in Cambodia. This surge of activity then necessitated an urgent need to co-ordinate among all the UN agencies and other multilateral donors. The co-ordination was required at three levels: (1) international level, (2) national level, and (3) field level.

At the international level, since 1994 a series of donor meetings (the International Committee on the Reconstruction of Cambodia - ICORC) have been held in Tokyo, Phnom Penh, and Paris. A fourth will soon take place in Tokyo. With technical assistance from UNESCO and financial assistance from UNDP and UNICEF, the MOEYS has been able to strengthen its planning capabilities for these meetings by formulating priority plans of action for presentation at these meetings, and has succeeded in attracting considerable amounts of aid.

After the first ICORC meeting in Tokyo, the elected Government started to play the lead role in co-ordinating international aid in Cambodia, organizing regular meetings and consultations. Co-ordination at national level also became more intensive. In the MOEYS, two new units have been established to serve this function: (1) The Aid Co-ordination Unit, and (2) The Programme Management and Monitoring Unit (PMMU). So far, the co-ordination, both vertically and horizontally between donors have greatly improved.

At the provincial level, the Provincial Education Offices have also started to play a lead role in co-ordination, particularly since a number of agencies have established offices to implement and supervise field activities. Horizontally, the co-ordination has been done by planning and sharing programme information: pre-school, primary, secondary, literacy, skills training and tertiary education. Donors and implementing agencies of each programme have co-ordinated their work by organizing monthly meetings at the CCC or at the MOEYS.

One of the advantages of the high level of NGO involvement has been to demonstrate that small-scale projects working from the bottom-up are a more effective means of development. One of the challenges for the years ahead will be to integrate the efforts of diverse donors, the plans of the government and the needs and aspirations of local communities. Development of the cluster school network *at its best* has shown that this is possible - but much work remains to be done.

4.3 Conclusion

In light of Cambodia's general social and economic situation, and its unstable political and security situation, the achievements in education in recent years are remarkable. Building on the foundations provided by the mass teacher-training, school rehabilitation and literacy campaigns of the 1980s, international agencies and NGOs have introduced a range of innovative developments during the 1990s. The cluster school network is a fine example of a cost-effective model, as reflected in government plans to expand the system nation-wide.

Once resources for basic primary education have been secured, other priority areas including adult literacy, skills training, pre-school, and work oriented lower secondary education are expected to be implemented. Demand for these programmes are steadily rising. However, the high rate of population growth may prevent the Government from distributing more resources from primary into other levels of education. The reaction of international donors to government plans for education for the remainder of the decade has been positive, and considerable sums of aid have already been committed. Realistic and attainable strategies will be needed to build on the progress which has been made.

Some potential risks of course remain. An uncertain economic outlook might constrain government progress towards increasing absolute levels of investment in basic education, even if the target for a 15 per cent share of public expenditure is met. If the political situation worsens, this will increase military spending and reduce the education budget, while at the same time, a failure to secure requisite amounts of foreign aid would also have a negative impact on progress. Neither of these scenarios is anticipated, however.

In 1996, the government reported that Cambodia had achieved self-sufficiency in food production for the first time in the past 25 years. This may contribute positively to a greater community participation in education, especially in school construction and ability to send more children to school.

At the same time, legislation on education is also being drafted and is expected to be approved by the Parliament in the near future. Currently, the education system is being operated under the Constitution. Legislation for different levels of education are urgently required.

Assuming increased co-operation between the diverse parties involved, and effective co-ordination of aid and agencies, there is no reason why Cambodia should not continue to improve its basic education facilities up to and beyond the year 2000.

Annex 1. List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CCC	Co-operation Committee for Cambodia
EFA	Education for All
EU	European Union
ICORC	International Committee on the Reconstruction of Cambodia
IDPs	Internally Displaced People
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JSRC	Japan Sotoshu Relief Committee
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
NFUAJ	National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
TVET	Training/Vocational Education and Skills Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia

Annex 2. Pilot Cluster School Sites in Cambodia

UNICEF	Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Stung Treng and Takeo
Redd Barna	Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Kompong Cham
Concern	Banteay Meanchey
SIPAR	Prey Veng, Svey Rieng and Kompong Chhnang

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